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FLORENCE

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FLORENCE

by

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Report

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Abstract

FLORENCE

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Florence is an 8-minute narrative film about an adolescent girl with a spectrum of Asperger's Syndrome that is medically misdiagnosed and prescribed psychotropic medication. The following report gives an account of the conception, pre-production, production and post-production phases of the film's realization. The lessons learned through both successes and failures will be considered as well as the future life of the project.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
Introducing Myself	1
The Developing Process ~ Assistance & Art	5
Personal Influences	6
Film Inspirations	9
Pre-Producing the Production	14
Casting Stones, Skipping Rocks	15
Rehearsals, well, Conversations	17
Actualizing the Script	19
Editing (a.k.a.) putting <i>Florence</i> in a Box	21
Sounding (or how <i>Florence</i> found her way)	23
Colors ~ Beneath the Foam is a Magenta Core	25
Future?	27
Conclusivity.....	28
Appendix A ~ Shooting Script	29
Appendix B ~ Figures	38
References	42

List of Figures

Figure B1:	Leonora Carrington's <i>Darvault</i>	38
Figure B2:	Leonora Carrington's <i>Self-Portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse)</i>	38
Figure B3:	Josephine McAdam's headshot	39
Figure B4:	Ali Meier onset of <i>Florence</i>	39
Figure B5:	David Lee Hess' headshot	40
Figure B6:	Hal Schneider's headshot	40
Figure B7:	Daniel Hershberger onset of <i>Florence</i>	41
Figure B8:	Creative core of <i>Florence</i>	41

Introducing Myself

The concept of viewing myself as a filmmaker was never a conscious thought until I was in my third semester at the University of Texas at Austin's Radio, Television, Film graduate production program. Prior to that point in my life, I was simply pursuing life's passions. I had remained in my hometown of Fairbanks, Alaska for the first twenty-six years of life attending the University of Alaska Fairbanks, studying history and music education in a casual, yet dedicated manner. My sincere passion though, was music.

From the time I was fourteen years of age I was enthralled and regularly attending concerts of local Fairbanks bands with the occasional Anchorage band making the 360+ mile trek north. In the depths of stagnant winters of arctic temperatures and everlasting darkness, these concerts, with hundreds of adolescents and young adults feverishly crowded into small cabin-like venues, were solace and warmth, but most of all, community. By the age of sixteen I was in my first band, Dumbnation, barely knowing how to play guitar and even less-so, sing. Nonetheless, my pursuit carried on for a decade, finding me playing varying roles within the music community, ultimately evolving to opening a small record label consisting of Alaskan artists, organizing concerts, and taking over a directorial role for an annual free music festival that went by the name of Clucking Blossom. Over the course of these ten years two things remained constant: performing as a musician and documenting everything possible with whatever video camera I could get my hands on. Even as those countless concert recordings began to be accompanied by dozens of interviews to construct a historical documentary of the Fairbanks music scene, it never occurred to me, until after my prolonged bachelor's degree, that this was the natural direction my life was taking.

For all intensive purposes, I had spent a majority of my life avoiding TV and movies, thinking it largely to be a waste of time. While there is plenty of truth within that sentiment, I believe a greater discovery I've had since grad school is lots of the TV and film content I ingested *was* a waste a time. But contrary to my intentional ignorance,

there is a wealth of beautiful life and textures to be experienced within the medium. So, amidst my technical teachings, I've been having a greater knowledge garnered in simply watching many of these historically significant films for the first time in my life.

Exponentialized is the fact that I am experiencing these films not only with a nascent eye, but also the eye of a filmmaker, noticing the compositions, storytelling and editing in an analytical manner that I grew to listen to music as I became more adept as a musician and tried my hand at recording music.

The result has been both fruitful and frustrating. In many ways I've found myself progressing at a brisk pace in my cinematography, telling stories with images in a fashion I hadn't known prior. Additionally, my storytelling and editing has too matured. Being such a visually driven person has found successes in my experimentation with both the narrative and documentary formats. Most notably in my pre-thesis, *Uncertain, Tx*, where I gave an experiential representation of a small fishing town in the North East corner of Texas on the state's only natural body of water. Using a myriad of vertically framed shots, I constructed new images through triptych display, following in fashion of artists such as Hieronymus Bosch and his *Garden of Earthly Delights*. A distinction I only thought of after having shot a number of times in the small town and having talked with my classmate and incredibly well read friend, Mark Blumberg. To be completely honest, most of the similarities my work shares with anything is by subconscious means and happenstance. That's not to tout my efforts as wholly of an original approach, but rather proclaiming a willful ignorance to influences outside of myself when producing art, be it music or film. An approach, that with ample amounts of time, can bring great effect, such as I found in my decade romance with music, but at the root of it all, the approach is a fallacious one that prolongs the learning process into a technique that requires far greater time for results that could be achieved with wiser haste. Looking no further than *Uncertain, Tx*, it becomes painfully obvious that while I achieved visual success at

portraying the town in an inventive manner unto itself, I failed greatly at having an engaging storytelling element that pulls the viewer along through the rich visuals the town provided. I attested at the time that I wasn't trying to have such a story thread, and it's true, but looking back on the film, particularly after successive rejection letters from film festivals, I now know that that is what would have elevated my short documentary to greater effect.

The festival rejections actually didn't prove to be such fatal of a blow as the rejection of a lover though. I had a wildly successful pre-thesis year, shooting three films other than my own, and all three of those director/cinematographer relationships have proven to be foundational in my growth as a cinematographer, filmmaker and storyteller. With Alvaro Torres-Crespo it has manifested in traveling to Costa Rica on two separate occasions to shoot his thesis-turned-feature documentary about the *oreros* (gold-panners) along the edge of the naturally magnificent Corcovado National Park. With Mark Blumberg it became shooting Tony Costello's thesis film, *Lost Nights*, which he produced as well as commercial work in conjunction with Andrew Bujalski's *Results*, and is currently congealing into shooting his thesis film that is pushing my cinematographic capabilities in manners never thought: from classical lighting to dynamic reframing in vein of Akira Kurosawa to underwater cinematography. And with Kyle Seaquist it matured into a beautiful creative collaboration in Andrew Shea's Dogme filmmaking class with our film, *A Thief in the Night*; a work we both consider to be our best to date with plans to expand upon similar tonality and execution in his thesis film.

While all three of these relationships, along, in part, with learning alongside and from my fellow classmates, have allowed an unanticipated growth and understanding of filmmaking, it has been my correlation with Kyle that has seen my greatest advancements as a storyteller. Not only have I come to a better understanding of how to make a more

engaging film, but how to work intimately with someone from conceptualization to completion.

Taking in these lessons of intimate collaboration from the earliest stages to allowing a more conscious and concise utilization of inspirations were important changes to my rhetoric of conceiving my thesis film.

The Developing Process ~ Assistance & Art

I am fortunate in that my wife, Yamel Thompson, is not only a supportive and brilliant woman, but she is also a filmmaker and photographer as I am. From the emerging sentiments of *Florence* to its screening she has been a collaborator in nearly every conceivable manner. Most notably she, alongside Kyle, helped me with writing the script. When I would find myself stuck as how to progress along my twelve drafts, these two individuals aided dramatically in the story's evolution, letting me know what worked and what was confusing, as well as offering some of their own ideas as how to solve the arising story problems. I am greatly in debt to these two, specifically from late March to mid-June when *Florence* was in its final restructuring stages prior to its mid-July production date.

I had wanted to do a narrative for my thesis for a myriad of reasons, namely in that I had only really pursued two other narrative endeavors prior, all within my graduate education, and I wanted to continue to explore that fictional world development with the support of my fellow classmates and the school; equipment, teachers, et al. I find a similar world developing sensation when I am editing together a documentary of copious hours of footage where there seem to be countless possibilities on how to weave together the film. I thought another narrative exploration would play an appropriate role in maturing my storytelling that was lacking in *Uncertain, Tx*. I still wanted to explore a non-traditional infrastructure in the telling of *Florence*, but within that context I planned to supplement a greater disposition towards traditional story values, paying attention to story beats and a loose interpretation of a 3-act structure to create a more engaging film.

Initially I had looked at the life and work of Leonora Carrington, a Mexican surrealist painter who suffered from “mental illness” throughout her life, and a large portion of the initial screenplay was constructed directly around her paintings and tid-bits of her life. At the beginning, Florence was an artistic adolescent who was withdrawn

from school in the depths of her artistic imagination and her anti-social behavior was misinterpreted as a mental illness; be it depression and/or social anxiety. She was found constructing a drawing nearly identical to one of Carrington's paintings {see figure B1}. Other elements of Carrington's work were found in dream-like white room environments, linking Florence towards an integral connection with nature and the wilderness {see figure B2} as opposed to societal environments such as school that caused her anxious reactions.

At the yearnings of several classmates, Yamel, and my thesis instructor, PJ Raval, Florence gradually became less of the clichéd 'misunderstood artist' and more towards a character unto herself. That evolution eventually turned *Florence*, character and screenplay, towards what I was always seeking to say with this film, that of the overmedicating of today's youths, the easily dispensed pill to "correct" students' behavior (be it for ADHD or depression, etc.); specifically within the school system of the United States of America. Carrington's influence matured from a literal use of her artistic works to looking at the medical institutions' manners of dealing with her mental intricacies and intertwining that with my personal relationship and understanding of mood-restructuring medication.

Personal Influences

From a young age I became acquainted with the concept of medication through my brothers who both at various times in their lives were given pills for ADD and ADHD. Most specifically, I remember my brother being prescribed Ritalin by the age of 10 years because he had an unbridled energy and "misbehaved" by not acting in the fashion the teachers and school deemed appropriate. Ritalin was given as a means of controlling his immense energy and forcing a level of focus he was reported to not possess.

Nothing sticks out in my mind more than my brother proclaiming that he “felt weird” because of taking the medication, and more so than the actual words he used, it was the tonality and the scared, confused presence at which he presented this to my parents. As to what their exact response was, I don’t remember, but I’m positive it was along the lines that the sensation will pass and it will begin to help.

Years later I heard a story recalled from my mother about my father taking him to the emergency room’s parking lot because he had a continued and unending sensation that he was falling off a building. Ultimately, my father was able to talk him out of the sensation, using his skills in psychology learned from a master’s education, and they went home without having visited the actual room for emergencies. I can’t help but find a deafening similarity to the tents at Woodstock where festival-goers would retreat to when having a bad trip on acid or various hallucinogens and be ‘talked down’ from their bad experience to some kind of congenial homeostasis. To think that my brother was the only one experiencing such unnerving side effects, let alone at such a young, impressionistic age, seems like an obvious fallacy. Further still, to find out in my collegiate days that Ritalin, Adderall, and other ADD-related medication were being taken both recreationally and as an ‘academic steroid’ only exasperated my conception that these powerful drugs were prescribed without care as the number of children and adolescents reportedly with ADD sky-rocketed from the mid-90s to 00s.

Less than a decade later I had the most foundationally shifting experience of my life as one of my best friends committed suicide one dark October night during a mutual friend’s 20th birthday celebration. After the fact, we found out that _____ had been taking anti-depressants for a number of years with varying degrees of success as he hopscotched around different brands and dosages as is usual when trying to “discover” which of these medications is the best match. Admittedly, our group of cohorts were no strangers to marijuana and experimenting with hallucinogens and of the sorts, so when

_____ informed me in between classes at the University of Alaska Fairbanks that he had taken two of his anti-depressant pills that day and was feeling INCREDIBLE, I didn't think it to be the end of the world, and I simply cautioned him that I thought he shouldn't be doing that too often. Little did I, or any of our friends, know that prior to his commitment that October night, he had done with double dosages a few times throughout the week and subsequently ran out of his medication. As can only be assumed, I imagine he feared repercussions from telling his parents he needed a refilled prescription earlier than necessary, and he went without his medication for an unknown amount of days. Thus, everything became exponentialized after a few beers from the birthday pony keg, a per usual wrestling scenario occurrence, and a follow up of the alarmingly per usual "fuck you guys, I'm going to kill myself." _____ had proclaimed this statement of suicide on numerous, numerous occasions and protocol would usually have it that I would ALWAYS go upstairs to the deck of the house and he would be sitting out there smoking a cigarette, happy as can be, sometimes mocking me with a smile, "Ohhh, you thought I was actually gonna kill myself did ya?!" And we'd share a laugh about it and go back with everyone else.

Well this time, the laughing happened upon his heated proclamation. After the standard few minute wait, I went upstairs to find him in his normal stupor, laughing at me for being concerned. But there was nothing normal; he was nowhere to be found. I called his name and walked down the stairs into the snow and looked around for a moment before reporting in the basement that I couldn't find _____. What I still wonder to this day is if I would have gone up sooner, or perhaps just around the corner to that new fence on Iris Lane, the road I grew up on in for the first 13 years of my life, that I would have caught him in the act of attaching his belt to the fence.

None of that happened though. Instead, a group of the friends went out a bit later and came back vastly alarmed as they rushed off without giving much of an explanation.

Hours later it was confirmed and the greatest numbness I had felt sunk in, deep, enunciated by the communal mourning of our closest of friends. As the days went on and we spoke with his parents and did our own research on the matter it was found out that specifically on the medication's directions that it states, "sharp increases or decreases can cause suicidal thoughts." I was dumbfounded. Is this really the only means of assistance _____ could have come upon? Yes, he misused the medication, and the company cannot be blamed for that, but to this day the fact a side effect of that nature could be found and accepted on medication so readily handed out boggles my mind.

It seems that for all the research, time and money that goes into creating these psychotropic medications, there could be more organic/safer methods of medicating or, better yet, curing these ailments. More than anything though, the unnerving nature of these medications comes, not in their existence, for I am sure they have helped many in substantial ways, but the proliferation of their use. Especially in the U.S.A., it seems like depression has spread like an airborne illness and more and more people are prescribed these medications daily. The greater problem arises not when consenting adults are choosing to take these medications, but when children and adolescents in schools are being encouraged because of abnormal social behaviors. As Thomas Szasz talked about in his papers detesting against mental illness, calling it an institutional means of controlling society, he states ever so poignantly that the term mental illness is used in defining those that do not fit within the societal norms sought. His work holds an unwavering candle towards understanding today's overmedicated society.

Film Inspirations

Trying to go counter-intuitive to my previous film endeavors, I looked deep into my film lexicon and took recommendations I would get from people I shared my script

with. Initial references that stuck from the beginning stages were Nicolas Refn's *Drive*, David Cronenberg's *Videodrome*, and Carl Th. Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*.

I had always loved the days before computer-generated FXs really took over and we saw a loss of practical FX usage. To me, Cronenberg exuded the world of practical FX, from the iconic exploding head of catering's meat leftovers in *Scanners* to the vaginal VCR abdomen that James Woods possessed in *Videodrome*. There was something wholly organic and earnest feeling about seeing these FX as tangibly conceived materials as opposed to shiny, glossed over CG intricacies. While the level and proficiency at which Cronenberg works with practical FX is far beyond what I achieved in *Florence*, I was more concerned with beginning to incorporate such elements into my storytelling at this stage in my filmmaking so as to progress that aesthetic as I continue on with my career, rather than to have such a direct focus so as to master its implication from the start.

Refn's *Drive* tickled a different sensation for me; I had seen the film during my first year at UT when my interests in film were renewed and budding. I was becoming acutely aware of the filmmaking process as never before, and *Drive*'s aesthetics and tone excited me. In particular, there was the scene in the elevator where the film takes its first turn towards the violent as the lights were gagged and Ryan Gosling gives a passionate kiss before smashing in the head of a villainous character. Aside from it just being a beautifully composed shot, I UNDERSTOOD the shot, I knew how the light and camera were being manipulated, and I loved the sensation it gave me. Backtrack one-year prior, and this understanding wouldn't have been the case. I knew that I too wanted to achieve mid-shot aesthetic shifts like this in my thesis. Though many of the lighting gags didn't make their way into the final cut, the one that was always intended to be there has remained as the counselor locks eyes with Florence before standing overhead and regurgitating a myriad of pills into her mouth.

Perhaps most subconsciously influenced out of everything was Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. A proverbial classic to many for all of the obvious reasons; a landmark of cinema, especially considering the time period it graced the world in 1928. Its use of absurdly emotive close-up shots on Maria Falconetti (as well as the most of the cast), odd top-heavy compositions, free-floating association from its environment (through the use of copious close-ups), and its mind-blowing musical accompaniment from Richard Einhorn, all culminated in an earth-shattering way upon me. This was, like *Drive*, a discovery during my impressionable first year at UT. I became obsessive with the film and watched it in parts and in whole more than any film ever in my life, spanning some 20+ viewings. I had never preconceived taking direct inspiration from the film, but upon entering the editing room and looking over my footage, I was comfortably surprised to find many similarities. Particularly the depiction of a voiceless Florence seemed to offer a less theatrically emotive protagonist without agency that's continually persecuted by the world and people around her. To say the least, I felt in good company when in the throes of editing.

After my initial presentation of the thesis idea to my classmates in Don Howard's pre-thesis editing class in the spring of 2013, I was immediately recommended to watch David Lynch's *Eraserhead*. People were surprised I hadn't seen the film based on my presentation of a surreal film largely devoid of dialogue that delved into a portion of its narrative content through a dense sound design. Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Holy Mountain* was both recommended to be watched as well as to be avoided. Buñuel's films and reading the surrealists' manifesto rounded out the recommendations that stuck to me most.

The latter two recommendations brought me more to the conclusion that my film had less to do with classical/actual surrealism, and more to do with peoples' contemporary (perhaps mistaken) interpretation and overuse of the term. There are

surreal elements to *Florence*, but I find it hard to say *Florence* is composed of irrationally significant imagery. I might go so far as to say all the imagery is rationally significant. From the subconscious, yes, but to simply state it's surrealism because of that is where I think the contemporary world's overuse of the word comes in. Then again...I could be misinterpreting all of this in itself too ~

Jodorowsky's *Holy Mountain* laid within me a relentless drive to achieve my wildest thoughts possible [perhaps this is why I was warned to avoid it!]. Awareness of budget restraints luckily kept the script from becoming unreachable, but as I was watching it for the first time, I was innately filled with a sick joy of the power a filmmaker can have for following their own visions. Above all else though, watching *Holy Mountain* as well as *El Topo* has instilled in a me a fever to always retain core elements to my stories that I feel are essential, no matter the feedback or critique that say otherwise. This isn't to claim superiority or idyllic pretention, but rather the necessity to honor one's own vision over another's when it comes to a story's envisioning. It's in the editing room where these visions can and should be squelched if they don't work within the film. When one is conceiving the script in particular, I feel this is the best place to let them soar.

The entire above aside, the film to impact me more than any other would become Lynch's *Eraserhead*. With *Florence* having such a strong audiological component, even at the script stage, *Eraserhead* became an obvious Northern Star as pre-production ended and was carried through production up to the finalizing sound design/mix. Lynch's insanely dense sound design was precisely what I was channeling when initially writing the script. To then find a film that so adequately depicted my notions after the fact was a godsend. While in talks with the sound designer Rui Silva, we had a constant eye and ear as to what elements we could have visually in the film that would be fully actualized once sound design was intact. Similarly, talks with the sound recordist Sebastian Bisbal

garnered notions of *Eraserhead* as well as Argentinian filmmaker Lucrecia Martel who also had a keen sense as to the necessity of a strong sound design. She is credited with commenting on the fact that in filmmaking, sound is the one sense that is recreated in genuine wholeness. Needless to say, all of these talks and inspirations led to the intricate sound design that *Florence* came to rely on. If nothing else, *Eraserhead* became the conduit in which to begin conversations with my sound team, thus providing me with the critical lesson that giving overt attention to a medium's historical works provides a readily available lexicon in which to start conversing with the expansive community that a film's conception entails.

Pre-Producing the Production

As the Spring 2014 semester came to a close, I focused my efforts upon completing the script for *Florence* and applying for the Austin Film Society Grant. This process proved infinitely helpful in finalizing many details that were still up in the air, as well as airing out my thoughts in a long form manner. Having to construct a rough budget on top of articulating my aspirations for the project not only allowed me to view into my inner psyche at a new depth, but it made discussions with crew and cast more fluid and productive.

By the time of the AFS grant application's completion, June 1st, I had already locked in Rui Silva as my sound designer, Jim Hickcox as cinematographer, Allie Lane as production designer, and Kyle Seaquist as Assistant Director and co-editor. With all four individuals I have extensive personal relationships garnered through my attendance in the MFA program. I had met Rui when shooting Alvaro Torres-Crespo's pre-thesis, *Small Paranoid Machines*, and knew he had an extensive background in music and sound design. We gelled over mutual appreciation of esoteric metal bands and having shared experiences and love for performing music live. Jim had come to be known as another cinematographer in the program, like I had, and he was a perfect fit in many ways. His knowledge and experience of cinematography was quite different than mine, though we had a shared aesthetic and admiration for the weird that brought everything together. We ALSO had a shared appreciation for esoteric metal bands (my heart melted when I found out he was also in love with the Tacoma, Washington metallic hardcore act, *Botch*). I was particularly excited to intertwine our different ideas of cinematography and cinema, knowing that the culminating images would be something other than a direct capitulation of my thoughts, and instead something fresh and, at times, unexpected. I had met Allie Lane in PJ Raval's cinematography in the fall of 2012, and we had kept good friends since, talking frequently of collaborating outside of the class. After she graduated she

started working within the Austin film community as a production designer. So, when I began crewing, she became an obvious choice. She brought a refreshing point of view to the project, and it was really great to have another female perspective brought to the film to compliment all that Yamel had done in the script-writing phase. Kyle was a shoe-in on all accords because of our past experiences together on his pre-thesis, *Standing Water*, and our Dogme '95 short, *A Thief in the Night*. Also, living together didn't hurt the collaborative effort either.

Working outwardly from this core I was able to find a devout soundman in fellow MFA classmate, Sebastian Bisbal, who brought his own ideas to the production, while also being incredibly supportive of the ideas I already had in place. Apart from having Yamel switching positions from script supervisor to 1st AC, a saddening pragmatic move, we had all of our core pieces except for a gaffer. Luck shined through unto our production though as Jim and I found a true gem a mere 10 days before production in fellow MFA student Ben Ellsworth-Feher. He was our missing link in so many ways, and he brought with him an unprecedented knowledge of lighting that elevated the production quality of *Florence* exponentially. The definitive and professional look of *Florence* became a beautiful marriage between Jim, Ben, and my extensive talks over a couple meals at the Go-Go Gourmet off Speedway. I think it's fair enough to say that the home-cooked meal aesthetic of the restaurant bolstered our discussion ~

Casting Stones, Skipping Rocks

In the midst of figuring out the final pieces of the crew, I began the casting processing in early June; prior to traveling to Mexico for a couple weeks to see Yamel and then up to Alaska for a Canadian road trip with my mother on her route to Ferndale, Washington where her and my dad were moving. I add the latter part of that sentence

because of how relieving it was to cast a month and a half ahead of production. Had I the time and no travel, it is quite likely that I wouldn't have cast for another week or three.

I had the help of two producers, Stacy Mann and Courtney Scarborough, to take care of some of the pre-production tasks, but ultimately I made the mistake of taking on too much of a producer's role with *Florence*. Aside from stretching myself too thin, a very positive occurrence happened with the auditioning phase; I was completely alone. For each of the 40+ people that came into audition for the roles of Florence, The Counselor, and The Mother, I had an intimate 30-45 minute conversation with each of the actors. To put it lightly, it was the most enjoyable auditioning experience I have ever encountered and I anticipate conducting all auditions this way until it proves impossible. The task of choosing which actors became a simple equation of: *who did I get along with and understand the best; and vise versa?*

Immediately Josephine McAdam {see figure B3} became Florence. She looked the part, she had life experiences that put her at a wide range of emotional maturity, and most of all; we clicked...a lot. She understood everything I was conveying, and most importantly, she didn't skirt away from giving me her point of view on aspects of the script during the audition. It was exactly what I wanted in every crew and cast position, someone who's a collaborative member of the filmmaking collective. I had gotten to know her in brief as a make-up artist during the KB shooting phase in Spring 2012 on Jing Yang's film, *Butterfly*.

Ali Meier (see figure B4) won me over with her meditative demeanor, physical likeness to Josephine, and inexperience. In some ways I wanted The Mother to be a more 2-Dimensional character, and Ali helped achieve that wonderfully. Her willingness was infectious on set.

The Counselor role, long considered to a dense character with a string of intricacies, was incredibly important to me. The aesthetics of the individual were a

leading factor, but the actor also had to understand medication. Not necessarily understand it like me, or even share my point of view, but have a strong opinion brought to the table. At the end of the auditions I ended up doing a callback for the Counselor role and I was in a toss up between David Lee Hess {see figure B5} and Hal Schneider {see figure B6}. Both of the men opened up to me (and I to them) in a beautiful manner. We connected and they both had firm stances on medication. It was really everything I was looking for. David would bring the Counselor to a more paternal figure, and Hal would take the Counselor to a more ambiguous manner. In some ways, David fit a couple drafts I had written, and Hal fit a couple others. Ultimately though, I went with a man I got to know on Alvaro's pre-thesis, *Small Paranoid Machines*, Daniel Hershberger {see figure B7}. We had bonded deeply on the film and stayed in contact over the years. Apart from David or Hal, Daniel would make the Counselor twisted and incredibly defined. Not to mention he brought an incredibly multi-layered knowledge of medication to the role that ONLY Daniel could bring. I called him up and found he was in Ohio working construction. After minimal coaxing I talked him into coming down for the role, I'd pay his bus fare to get him down. There's more to Daniel and I's story in *Florence's* production phase, but I'll leave it up to the imagination with the parting words that we pushed each other to our limits and became even closer than we were before.

In the aftermath of Daniel's casting, David became the friendly Biology Teacher, and Hal became the dictatorial Math Teacher. They both fit the roles exquisitely and I couldn't have been happier with how the three of these men fit into the equation of *Florence*.

Rehearsals, well, Conversations

I've never been one to do rehearsals (granted my director experience is extremely limited), I have instead come to favor simply getting to know each other better, and

through those conversations both of us getting to know their characters better. As with my crew, I want my cast to bring their own ideas to the table to combat or combine with mine. Every single one of them brought their own flavors to the table, and I am grateful for such.

It is worth noting though, that Hal went above and beyond any expectations I could have had. While the rest of the cast molded the characters with my ideas and theirs, Hal brought out an entirely new presentation of the idea I gave him of the Math Teacher. His mannerisms were how we discussed, but the expansive Carol Lewis math equation that he spewed out was ENTIRELY of his doing, and to put it lightly, it was out of this world. Proceeding his first take on the third day of production, the entire crew bust out in an applause of his three and a half minute diatribe. The man killed it in a manner that was uncalled for, and because of such, the math scene transformed in a most spectacular fashion.

On a fairly different note, but same sentiment, Josephine breathed a life into Florence that I had dreamed. She was the teenager I had envisioned upon finishing my twelfth draft of the script, but instead of just stopping there, she brought these tiny deafening details to who Florence was: the nervous tick of rubbing her geometric necklace in times of anxiety, her preoccupation with her Chap Stick placement, the braid in her hair; it was all so delicately conceived. And all these rehearsals ever were, were conversations, getting to know each other and our characters better; I as the director, and they as their role. It couldn't have felt sweeter.

Actualizing the Script

The production phase of *Florence* was absurdly smooth. That's not to say there weren't the occasional hang-ups and "learning-on-the-fly" moments, but all in all everything worked out.

All of the conversations I had had with the cast and crew let the entire shooting period glide like a figure skater over a freshly Zamboni'ed ice rink. Had the conversations not taken place, there would have been dozens of moments where I was too caught up in an aspect of the production design or lighting or finding extras or talking to actors and things would have faltered. But the extensive pre-production had paid off in full as everyone knew their role on set, and best of all, were willing to step up to others' roles if the need was there.

I had wanted to work with a small-ish crew, and I think we succeeded as a result of such. Everyone felt essential to the film's success and people were kept briskly busy. That being said...

The biggest lessons I learned during production were the necessity of an active producer, apart from myself, on set for the entire production. My two producers were in large part unable to be on set because of prior obligations, and I found myself grabbing breakfast nearly every morning, which, on top of driving the equipment truck to set, proved to stretch my mental capacity thin and weary on a few occasions. Again, through the luck of an enthusiastic crew, everything worked out.

Additionally, the necessity of extras was felt in full, on the first day at LBJ high school. We had a limited number of responses to the casting calls, and because the main people to respond were actresses who didn't get the role of Florence, we were left with a disproportionate amount of women extras. Luck again shined upon us though as there was a summer school camp going on during our three production days at LBJ high school. Two of the camp teachers and an assistant to the principal at LBJ actually asked

us if we needed more students for the production! We were dumbfounded...further still; they went the extra mile to make sure we could get the release forms out to all of the students that first day! Before we knew it, we had well over a dozen extras of the perfect age and diversity for the remaining two days of shooting. If ever there were a godsend, we received it from the wonderful people at LBJ.

The teenage boy that approached Florence in the cafeteria scene was just one of the dozen-plus kids that had had their parents sign the waiver. After two shaky performances, Taylor got a handle on his delivery and blocking and we were set. To make matters even more perfect, Sebastian took Taylor into the highway after we wrapped the cafeteria scene and grabbed a handful of wild line renditions to give us the perfect audio and performance. You can hear Sebastian coaching Taylor to vary his line delivery on the recording; to me, that's magical, that's community, that's what it takes to make a great film. Neither the AD, Kyle, nor I asked Sebastian to do it, or even thought of it for that matter. He just knew of the necessity and acted upon it. To no surprise, those are indeed the lines/recordings used within the final cut of *Florence*.

Even while Jim and I had done our camera tests, figured out what lenses we wanted on the Arri Alexa's digital imagery, what film stock we wanted to use with the Arri BL-4 "Jay", found out what shutter speeds we wanted in the white room, what frame rates we wanted to shoot at various times, etc., we (well I) failed to test out how we were going to achieve our practical FX. A hilarious thing to think of it hindsight (why would one NOT test out how to execute their practical FX?!?), but in the moment of trying to figure out how to get pills to fall into Josephine's mouth on set, it was anything but funny. At least a good two hours were wasted on useless takes. A simple, yet ever-so-present learning lesson for me to carry on whether I am director or cinematographer: don't let there be "firsts" on set, unless it's a moment between actors or improvisation. I suppose this is just one of many reasons why they call these student films...

Editing (a.k.a.) putting Florence in a Box

In an attempt to take my experience from editing my pre-thesis documentary to its fullest potential, I decided to never look at my script of *Florence* while cutting my film together. I instead wanted the footage to stand on its own bearings. I wanted the footage to decide what the film was going to be, not the script. It's a lesson that I learned from Don Howard during my pre-thesis year, but had yet to implement into a narrative film where I thought its application to be even more poignant.

The first hoping-it's-a-fine-cut came in mid-November. I had initially planned on graduating in December of 2014, editing with Kyle over long distance while he was in Austin and I was shooting a feature documentary in Costa Rica with Alvaro, and a short narrative in Mexico with Yamel. It was a noble thought that almost got off on the right footing. I had a solid rough cut in September before I departed to Latin America, showed it to my committee and the works. The semester was mapped out as to how I was going to finish at a distance. My major error came in the form of not properly meeting up with my co-editor Kyle before leaving the country. Instead I just gave him the files, and we talked on Skype a few weeks later.

So, when I came back in mid-November with my cut, hoping that he had magically stirred up something compelling, I wasn't that surprised to find out that this fairy tale didn't exist. Kyle was busy working at Megalomedia, and our communication was far too sparse to even hope for a cut that would do *Florence* the justice it deserved.

Within a week upon my return it was decided that we would push the completion date back to May 2015, and boy did we ever make the right choice. The cut that was initiated by me had a lucid quality to it, but ultimately was a fairly straight representation of what the script was. Which was a narrative-ish film that didn't really have a traditional narrative arc and left the viewer wanting something more from the film.

Fast forward to March, and between Kyle and I putting copious hours into collaborative and individual editing we had started to assemble something representing the lucidity that *Florence* was always meant to have.

A defining moment in this discovery was that of doing a large chunk of pre-sound designing on our own. Prior to this, there was a lot of *Florence*'s cinematics that had to be up to the viewer's imagination, which, in concept should/could work, but honestly since so much of *Florence*'s script was a collage of sound cues, there was a necessity for those sounds to be laid in so we could find the rhythm to what we were trying to achieve.

The more sounds we laid in, the more dialogue we took out, and the more dialogue we took out, the more lucid and emotive the film became. When there was more of a set-up in the beginning of the film with Florence in the waiting room talking to her mother, it felt as if the rest of the film would follow in this narrative/dialogue-driven matter. But, the reality of the matter was that didn't represent any part of the film other than the beginning. Thus, when lifted out, the film began to breathe, and the film's meanings and themes became more transformable to the viewer's own perceptions, which is what *Florence* was always supposed to be. No matter how prescriptive the script felt on its commentary about the overmedication of youth, it was never supposed to suffocate people. Rather, it was supposed to be a strong current that ran through the film in a visual and audiological fashion, not one of pointed dialogue.

Florence continued to progress at a swift pace. We held a screening at the beginning of March and got a handful of incredibly helpful feedback, leading to the changes discussed above. The changes continued, and things felt smoother and smoother.

Then a month and a half later, something changed.

Florence was not feeling so smooth anymore. Some moments felt too abbreviated, and cheapened in an effort to boil the film down to its necessities.

What I had effectively done was get too much feedback, and then tried to listen to all of it. Near the beginning of April, I showed Charles Ramirez-Berg a cut, and he was blown away. We talked about its content for a moment, about how much I thought I still had to edit, etc. And right before his departure from Avid Suite #4 he said, “It’s looking great, just make sure not to edit it too much more. You might ruin it.”

I chuckled and bid him farewell. I even talked about what he said with Kyle and Yamel, but never really thought deeply on what he said until 3 weeks later when I had in fact ruined *Florence*. In almost comedic fashion, I had done exactly what Charles had so kindly made me aware of. I let far too many cooks in the kitchen, and I let everyone put their favorite spices in. And it tasted bland and lost...

Lucky it is that I live in the days of non-linear editing. Following a day of deep depression over having destroyed my film, I took a day off and came back to my timelines. It was the 22nd of April, and I went back to a timeline from the 30th of March and watched it. “Oh hey!” I exclaimed, “There’s my film!” Within 8 hours I merged the best of moments from my April 22nd cut to the March 30th and April 4th cuts, came back the next day for final touches and sent everything over to my sound designers Rae and Rui.

Sounding (or how Florence found her way)

So, my cut had taken far too long. I had meant to picture-lock, at the latest, one week prior, if not two. That left my two sound designers, one of which lives in Portugal, 5 days to finish sound design on a film that was meant to have it be the stable spine intertwining everything together.

In a hasty decision, I talked to Rui over Skype and asked if he would mind mixing the film, effectively giving him an additional 5 days to do the sound design. He agreed to it, I spoke briefly with Rae, and we had a firm plan to get everything designed and mixed

by the 4th or 5th of May. It all sounded perfect, concise, and destiny. In lieu of my 24 hours of mixing time with Evan Dunivan, I was planning to have sound design and mixing done on my KA and KB films. To my knowledge, it was my time, and I was allowed to spend it how I wanted.

Hop, double skip and jump to Monday, April 27th and Susanne Kraft promptly tells me that that is definitely NOT allowed. A quicker talk with Keefe, and it is determined that it is a rule that my thesis must be mixed in house. A quality control measure, if you will. Let alone the simple idea that it IS 24 hours of thesis mixing. Honestly, who am I to argue? It makes sense, so I apologized for my ignorance to the matter and after an even quicker talk with Evan, I set about exporting my project to do sound mixing in 45 minutes.

An aside: It killed, and kills me, that Rui and I were not able to do the sound design for *Florence* that we had spoken of for so many months. Our meetings at Veggie Heaven and on Skype: talking about the intricacies of how to weave the ambiances and textures from one scene to the next, on what sounds we want to use, what plug-ins we needed to purchase, etc. It simply just isn't what we had planned, and unless Rui makes his own version of sound design for *Florence*, it will always be a mystery to me as to what *Florence* would have been.

Now, that being said, Evan came in and did an absolutely outstanding job. He incorporated all of the Mellotron sounds and ambiances Kyle and I had laid in our timelines, he took all of the foley and sounds Rae had been recording over the semester, and he threw in his own ideas, and he made one helluva sound design and mix over those 24 hours. *Florence* literally took a whole new shape with the work that Evan did. And at first, post-24 hour mixing, I had an adverse reaction to it. Things just felt different...they felt wrong. But upon a second viewing, I finally understood it. What I was experiencing was the unexpected/unknown collaboration with Evan. It was in some ways vastly

different than what I would have ever thought it to be, and at first, that made it feel really weird/off. With a little time under my head though, I came to fully appreciate this final collaborative element brought to *Florence*. Evan had done exactly what I wanted out of every member of my cast and crew. He came in, took my ideas, took Rae's, and brought in his own and formed a beautifully cohesive design. Sometimes those unexpected changes can be exactly what's needed to bring it all together. Be it fate or destiny or just pure chance, but I lucked out that it worked out how it all did.

Colors ~ Beneath the Foam is a Magenta Core

In these final days of completing *Florence*, my mind has taken a lucid turn towards just about all aspects of my life. This is, mainly, due to me getting next to no sleep, and pulling all-nighters every other night. Assuredly not the healthiest of practices, but I have nonetheless been garnering some truly fantastic results from this lucid decision-making. The final piece of this thesis puzzle has been coloring in DaVinci Resolve 11.

I have been getting a fair amount of practice with DaVinci over the last 3 weeks through color correcting a Kickstarter video Yamel and I had been working on, and then re-coloring Tony Costello's thesis *Lost Nights* that I shot in 2013 in preparation to submit it for my nomination for the ASC Gordon Willis Student Heritage Cinematography Award. Every minute spent on these projects has been invaluable, as I found myself able to navigate around the program like never before. In a 7-hour burst I colored my thesis, taking 3 passes on it in a single sitting. There's still a touch of work to be done, but I had a most wonderful discovery upon the completion of the film, albeit a slight one.

The color magenta has seemingly worked its way to the forefront of the color scheme. Whites are still retaining whiteness within the shadows to keep things looking natural, but on top of that is a pastel-ish magenta hue that is giving a merrier tone to a

film that otherwise is a dark, desperate situation for its protagonist. Let happiness be granted from these decisions made with the subconscious.

Future?

Florence is bar-none, the best work I have ever created. Period. Better than any piece of music or history paper I have written. It far exceeds any film I have conceived. It exceeds my vision of what the film would be when it was written. And I feel increasingly fortunate for that to have happened. It is not without its hard work and sacrifices that brought it to this point, but even as such is the case, one can't assume that every successive piece of work will overshadow the last.

Of course I have the deepest of urges for *Florence* to succeed on a larger scale. I want to see it play festivals all over the world, I want it to win awards for the cast and crew {see figure B8} that helped make this all that is has become. I want people to watch it and be prompted to think about medication. They don't have to draw some bombastic conclusions from the film, but if they could at least just be prompted to think or ask or converse, that in itself is the greatest success I could ask.

Conclusivity

However it all goes, I know that throughout these four years of grad school in RTF I have exponentially progressed as a filmmaker and cinematographer. I have made lifelong friends and connections, and I have forever changed my life course. I found my wife here, and she found me, and I have come to know and love a new community in a similar vein to the community I know and love back home in Fairbanks, Alaska. I am a fortunate soul that has been given a chance to do what I want with my life, and I will be certain to always capitalize on that and try my damndest to never take it for granted. My only hope is to somehow have my work aide in others' attaining of their dreams too ~

~::~~

Appendix A ~ Shooting Script

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Florence is kneeling in the forest, enraptured, at peace, and completely in her element. She has one EARBUD in the left ear that is emitting a pleasing rain forest ambience.

She removes the earbud and presses her ear to the ground, soaking in the vibrations and resonance of the earth's moving core.

The natural ambience exudes calm within its lush tonality. From the birds chirping above, to the snapping twigs from scurrying animals, to the singing of the wind through the leaves and branches. Everything becomes a beautiful, sonic coalescence.

Florence is in a cohesive comatose state, caught within a moment with her surroundings.

A hand on her shoulder breaks her state.

INT. COUNSELOR'S WAITING AREA - DAY

Florence looks up to the hand's owner, her mother.

She takes out her right earbud, ceasing her complete immersion of forest sounds. A pervading array of unsettling tones enters her right ear.

VICCI

Alright honey, he's ready for you.
Just listen to what he has to say,
and follow his instructions. This
is a big day.

Vicci waits a moment for an answer, but simply receives a slight nod.

VICCI (CONT'D)

Well, I have to get back to work.
See you at home Flo.

Florence slowly rises from her chair as Vicci heads down the hallway.

The crack in the counselor's door emits a subtle warm tone. She pushes through the door that reads, "Counselor Everette Scott Ortiz."

INT. COUNSELOR'S ORTIZ'S OFFICE - DAY

Florence enters the room and is immediately met by the sight of COUNSELOR ORTIZ sitting behind his DESK that is a neat CLUTTER OF BOOKS.

Flanking either side of him are MEDIUM-SIZED SHELVES full of books and the occasional MODEL OF A BRAIN. All of various sizes and parts.

The office holds a calming tonality to it with slight hints of static.

A disproportionately LARGE COMFORTABLE CHAIR sits in front of Everett's desk. Florence eases into it and looks at a smiling Counselor.

COUNSELOR ORTIZ

It's good to see you again,
Florence. I've got something for
you.

Counselor Ortiz reaches into a drawer and pulls out a PILL BOTTLE.

COUNSELOR ORTIZ (CONT'D)

Take these three times a day with
food. You might feel a little weird
at first, but things will smooth
out.

Florence looks at the pill bottle in front of her. A static sensation rises.

COUNSELOR ORTIZ (CONT'D)

Life is going to become easier.

TITLE SCREEN

INT. MATH CLASSROOM - DAY

Florence is despondently sitting in her CHAIR as the MATH TEACHER goes on in a sea of incomprehensible math jargon. THE WHITE BOARD behind him is filled with indiscernible math equations and knowledge.

Florence has one earbud in her left ear, and the right draped delicately in her shirt collar. The teacher's voice carries a fast paced mind-dulling drone along with it.

All the students are diligently taking notes in a synchronous fashion. The sounds of their unison collisions of pencil and paper gently rip through the air.

Florence takes notes much slower as she fails to keep pace with her classmates. The ticking of the clock has a sharpness alongside the pencils' banter.

Visually discomfited, Florence puts the other earbud in. Further drowning out the class around her.

INT. BIOLOGY CLASSROOM - DAY

The BIOLOGY TEACHER is leading the classroom in a delicate, soothing manner and pace. The WHITE BOARD behind him has several illustrated examples and notes to go along with his lecture on mitosis.

Florence is engrossed in the lecture and has a tunnel vision-like perspective that cuts off the majority of the world around her.

Both the audio and visual distractions that cause her daily unease at school seem to subside to a subtly. The teacher's voice floats in and out of being the primary noise present.

She doesn't wear her earbuds. Her legs do not shake. Relatively speaking, Florence is at peace.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Florence sits alone at the end of a LONG TABLE in the corner of the cafeteria as far from everyone as possible. A sea of sloshy talking, cooking, eating, and squishing noises are going on all around her.

Florence has both headphones in her ears, but the sounds still persist through the nature ambiances. She alternates between shaking either of her legs.

All of Florence's food is compartmentalized into TUPPERWARE CONTAINERS. She eats everything with SILVERWARE and has an exorbitant amount of NAPKINS in her LUNCH SACK. She takes great effort to remain clean of all food remnants.

Everywhere on the table outside of her constructed "eating center" is covered in a Vaseline-like substance with particles of food and dirt.

Florence reaches over and unzips her BACKPACK. She takes out the PILL BOTTLE and fondles it for a moment.

ODD-LOOKING BOY
What are those for?

Startled, Florence throws the pill bottle in her backpack and looks up to see an ODD-LOOKING BOY holding a TRAY OF FOOD and staring at her.

ODD-LOOKING BOY (CONT'D)
Are you sick or something?

Florence looks back down at her food. Embarrassed and ashamed. He sheepishly walks off to another table.

Florence's shaking legs become more violent and loud as she becomes lost in thought staring at her food.

A piercing bell rings out, signifying the end of lunch.

INT. HALLWAY - PASSING PERIOD

Florence is walking through a SEA OF TEENAGERS during passing period between classes.

Both earbuds are pouring nature sounds in at max volume to drown out her surroundings. She attempts to keep the similar tunnel vision-like focus towards the direction of the last class of the day.

The hallway seem to suffocate and close in on her and the surrounding students. It's almost as if the hallway is turning into a funnel as Florence proceeds through the mass.

The mass becomes increasingly more concentrated and intense in it's advancing upon Florence's sense of comfort. Bodies are pressed like sardines into one another.

Her earbuds become snagged by a passing BACKPACK and the entire environment lights afire with thick, goopy, all-consuming noises and sounds thrown into a debaucherous orgy.

Florence is debilitated by the environment's conquering sensations. The world around her fluctuates in brightness. Colors change. Reality twists ever so slightly. Her breath grows shorter and faster.

She reaches in a frantic manner to grab her earbuds and the music player falls from her pocket onto the floor. Immediately it is trampled by the blanket of bodies. A loud crunch affirms its fate.

Each second feels three times its length, the sensations growing more and more intense as people continue rushing by. Mild distortions take place in people's demeanor towards her.

The lighting seems to have dimmed and changed to an ominous fashion. People's faces take on a more threatening tone, all seemingly looking at her.

Florence's world begins to fluctuate between consciousnesses of white and black as a panic attack takes over.

Florence collects herself enough to push through towards the school's exit. She proceeds past Counselor Ortiz who is standing on the edge of the pit of passing students.

Florence looks up at Counselor Ortiz as she passes him and the two of them share a frozen moment within the frenzy of bodies. Florence, an ashamed glance. Everette, a knowing gaze.

Everette's eyes follow Florence as she returns her head to a lowered hang and pushes through the mass of students. He carries a concerned look at her obvious discomfort.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Florence pushes open the school entrance. Most everything outside is painted with an overexposed white tone. Florence herself dissolves into this overexposure as she enters into the sunlight.

The panic within her flourishes in the uninhibited sun. Noises become more violent and sharp as she propels herself off campus.

EXT. FOREST NEAR SCHOOL - DAY

Eventually she has surround herself in a nearby forested area.

She finds instantaneous bliss within the natural setting. Her emotions and anxiety begin to settle.

She drops down onto her knees upon the forest floor. She digs her hands into the earth and calms herself through the friction of the dirt against her hands as she pushes in.

She lies on her back and breathes deep. Exhaling out her unease. Her hair begins to intertwine with the grass and branches around her.

The forest floor begins to grow over the top of her, providing a delightful hugging sensation. A genuine euphoric smile crests on her face as she inspects the afternoon sky.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Florence lies on her BED in the exact manner as she was on the forest floor. Her BLANKET hugging her in the same fashion as the forest. The room has a softness to its audiological tonality, yet there's a distracting tickle to Florence's psyche.

A LIGHT KNOCKING is heard at her door and her mother enters with a GLASS OF WATER.

VICCI

Hi honey. I know today has probably been pretty intense, but I just wanted to let you know how proud I am of you. If you need anything, just let me know. We're in this together Flo.

Vicci kisses Florence on the forehead and runs her hand through her hair. They look into each other's eyes a moment.

VICCI (CONT'D)

I'll see you in the morning. Have a good night sleep.

Vicci exits Florence's room, lingering a moment at the door before closing it.

Florence reaches to the shelf above her bed, grabs her pair of NOISE CANCELLING HEADPHONES, and puts them on.

The space becomes electronically muted. A dull tone silences the room.

A different calming sensation takes over Florence's face. She "turns off" and stares into the dark nothingness on the ceiling.

INT. NONDESCRIPT WHITE ROOM - AMBIGUOUS

Florence is tied to her bed in a room that is otherwise white and empty. She struggles to get out of her imprisonment. Fruitlessly she looks around for an escape.

Vicci is suddenly at her bedside. Florence looks up at her in desperate confusion. Vicci mumbles an unintelligible gibberish that lays a soothing calm over Florence.

Within another moment her mother is holding her head still and wrenching her jaw open. Florence's eyes grow wide with terror.

7.

Counselor Ortiz appears at her bedside and drops a SINGLE PILL into her open mouth. Vicci closes Florence's mouth and Everette proceeds to gently massage the pill down her throat in a seductive manner.

The fear fades from Florence's eyes. Her body's strained position melts into calm. The ties restraining her have dissolved.

INT. FLORENCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Florence stares off into nothingness, lost in a thoughtless trance. Eyes wide open, but otherwise asleep and numb in demeanor.

The sun rises upon her face.

INT. HALLWAYS - DAY

Florence is lying in the same lifeless, numb manner on a KNEE-HIGH BENCH as a bevy of high school students flood past her in all directions. Her face reads unaffected by the proverbial hustle and bustle of academic responsibility surrounding her that normally causes her considerable unease.

She pushes herself up to a seated position and looks at her hands. Palms, then the backs.

Her hands begin to melt away like a candle. Skin to muscle. Muscle to bone.

Florence screams but no sounds come out. Everyone continues walking around her, conceivably unaware.

A hand rests on her shoulder, breaking her from her trancing shock. It begins rubbing her in a affectionately calming manner.

Florence raises her head to see who is touching her and she is met with Everette's face directly in front of hers. Their noses practically touching.

They remain silent. Caught within their own moment.

Florence reaches out and the two of them hug. Florence calms from the paternal embrace.

Florence tilts her head back, looking up at Everette and opens her mouth agape. Everette begins to regurgitate dozens of pills into Florence's mouth as she eagerly gobbles them up like a hungry young bird.

Water gradually begins pouring out of Everette's eyes like a faucet. The liquid fills Florence's mouth, providing a means of swallowing the mass of medication.

Florence begins to shake and convulse uncontrollably. Everette rests his open hand on Florence's forehead and pushes back on her like an evangelical preacher.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Florence falls onto her back in the thick of a forest. The soundscape is deliciously lush and soothing to her core. Every sound emitted provides a bed for which the ear to be gently made love upon.

Eyes still closed, she runs her hands through the grass, blades flowing between her fingers. She claws at it like a stretching cat. Her hands travel down to her hair. She gropes and plays with the long strands.

She opens her eyes and stares at the sky with a poetic calm. The world is still and silent.

Time crystallizes.

Sharper and more refined. The sounds too begin warping into discordant nails being driven into Florence's ears.

The world around her appears to become plastic and fake.

She curls into the fetal position and cups her ears. Blood begins running from between her fingers. She screams and a high pitch ringing emits from her mouth.

The ringing and the discord rise in cacophony, intertwining into a new dissonant chord. The sounds continue to sky rocket, reaching higher decibels and hertz. Effectively ripping Florence's entire existence in two.

Her body trembles. Beads of sweat begin pouring down her face. Her clothes becoming soaked along her armpits, chest, and spine of her back.

Her breathing is erratic and overwhelming. Her eyes dart around in a maniacal fashion looking for an escape. An end to the suffering.

In a final effort for control Florence takes in a deep breath of air and holds onto it.

Her heartbeat hastens. Her hands grip the earth in lost desperation. Her eyes roll into the back of her head, she exhales loudly and her body goes limp.

9.

Her tiny body is dwarfed by the engulfing wilderness.

The sounds cease into the identical drone of Florence's noise canceling headphones. Her body lifelessly strewn upon the forest floor. Gingerly lying in the dappled sun coming through the canopy of trees.

Suddenly she takes in a deep breath.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Florence jolts up in bed in a frenetic start. Her face pouring sweat. Her breath, fast and uneven.

She takes off her headphones and the room ambience envelopes her in a jangled comfort.

She runs her hand through her sweat-laced hair. Heavily pondering on her experience as she adjusts herself to a cross-legged upright position.

She covers her mouth and grabs her chin. Lost in thought.

After a moment's breath, she looks over at the GLASS OF WATER and PILL BOTTLE on the bedside stand.

Florence takes a deep breath in, and exhales.

CUT TO BLACK.

Appendix B ~ Figures



{figure B1}



{figure B2}



JOSEPHINE MCADAM

{figure B3}



{figure B4}



{figure B5}



{figure B6}
40



{figure B7}



{figure B8}

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